



Rebel Daughter, Feminist Revolutionary: Doris Anderson, 1921-2007.

Doris Turns 80!



My Hero

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Une jeune féministe raconte sa première rencontre à un lunch alors que Doris Anderson était la conférencière invitée. Elle décrit ses impressions sur cette femme qu'elle a qualifiée "d'héroïne."

Humbled. That is the only word I can use to describe how I felt when meeting Doris Anderson for the first time. Well, that's not entirely true. I could also use the words inspired and awed too. In fact, there are so many words to describe the impact Doris had on me, because there are a great many weighty, almost intimidating words that I associate with Doris. Journalist. Activist. Chancellor. Mother. Politics. Officer of the Order of Canada. Editor. Author. Champion of women's rights.

In one word: Amazing.

Being relatively new to the Canadian feminist scene (in comparison to Doris's 60-something year career span), I'd heard the amazing legend of Doris before I met her in person. The thing was, her stories weren't legend at all, but to a young feminist born with plenty of opportunity in the 1970s, it seemed as though that was the only thing they could be. Fortunately for all of us, every word of those stories is true.

Sitting at a table at a Canadian Club lunch in 2006, I heard someone mention that Doris Anderson was also in attendance. The only thing the women around me could then talk about was Doris. As plates were passed and the glasses were refilled, the group at the table recounted some of the stories I now know Doris is famous for, complete with quotes, mimicking gestures, and reverent nods at the end of every anecdote. As I listened to their stories about her, I searched around the room to get a glimpse of her, excited to finally see this great woman whom everyone held in such high regard.

It wasn't until after the lunch was over, as I was standing with Sherrill Cheda, the crowd shuffling past us toward the exit, I turned, and this sophisticated, seemingly austere lady with upswept white hair and a tasteful ensemble appeared in front of us. Her presence told me immediately

this was the woman I'd heard so much about.

Sherrill introduced me to Doris, and all of the big, daunting words I associated with Doris came flowing through my head. But one unexpected word came out on top of the heap above the rest.

Cool.

Doris was cool. It had never occurred to me that an Officer of the Order of Canada could be cool, but there it was. No other 29-year-old I know is half as cool as Doris was at 85-years-young. Her incredible bio aside, her mien, her humour, and the straightforward, no nonsense authority she possessed, was something I immediately admired.

A few months later, as part of the Vanguard group with the Canadian Women's Foundation, I hosted an event where Doris was the guest speaker. When introduced, she was almost blasé about her lengthy list of accomplishments and the great words said about her throughout the evening, seeming uninterested in hearing about herself. She seemed to just want to get down to brass tacks, real discussion, and next steps, particularly regarding the issue of proportional representation.

She was very realistic about the demands on women from all fronts, but made it clear that basically, all women need to be involved in the "doing," rather than just the "talking." She challenged us to be the ones to run for office, to get informed politically, to be the faces seen at Queen's Park, and to take our futures into our own hands, because no one was going to give us anything. Rather, we have to be ready to take it. And rather than talking about change, she encouraged us to find out specifically how to be the ones to get involved in Canadian politics, because, ultimately, that is where true power lies.

After she spoke, it seemed to me that all the discussion, and all the words used to talk about Doris were just that to her. Words. What I respected about Doris, from the few encounters I had and what I'd heard about her, was her ability to turn every word into action. This is truly what makes someone, as I said before, "Amazing." This is

also what will make her be forever remembered by those who knew her, and by those who can only wish they had opportunity to talk with her.

Hopefully the words and thoughts left by this Journal cement Doris's place in our evolving history, and most importantly, help to inspire and spur on the change that

she spoke so often about. Turning all of *these* words into action. I think that is a story about Doris that even Doris would be interested in.

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Women's Studies Archives Project

As a faculty member at the University of Toronto in the 1970s and 1980s I watched with admiration as York University created women's studies with apparent ease and swiftness. There was an abundance of committed scholars and intellectuals at York who came to our joint University of Toronto/York seminar series in women's studies – from one of the original faculty members at York, Professor Clara Thomas, to the most recent faculty and graduate students. They worked not only in the academy but in a variety of community organizations. In return they had support from the community for the creation of a library and, eventually, degrees, programs, and a School of Women's Studies. Leading women such as Doris Anderson and Nancy Ruth were enthusiastic about York's leadership. This was a period of enormous excitement for us all in our scholarly work and our personal lives.

Now forty years on, those pioneers in women's studies are retiring. They have left a great legacy in the Bridging Program for women students, the Nellie Library, the School of Women's Studies, the graduates and many scholarships including the scholarship in honour of Doris Anderson. Doris's papers are in the National Archives but what about that founding generation at York? Where are their papers? How will historians of intellectual and institutional history have the letters and papers, the photographs and memoirs to document this period in our history?

Our project at York is to create the Women's Studies Archives based on the papers of York's creators of the program. This Archives will join other important archives at York, such as that of the FWTAO, a great feminist organization which has left its papers to York University and the papers of Canadian women writers such as Margaret Lawrence, surely an inspiration to us all.

What Are We Looking For?

The Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections preserves and makes accessible the records of individuals associated with Women's Studies at York University whose papers possess enduring research value. Archivists look for significant documents that reveal influences upon the perspectives of faculty and administrators and provide evidence of their professional and personal activities, as well as their contribution to Women's Studies and a broader community of issues affecting women. They include not only documents created by a donor, but also documents received from other individuals or organizations associated with the donor's activities. Donation of an individual's records ensures that they survive and are available for use by the donor for personal reasons such as future research and writing, while avoiding loss due to poor storage, disasters such as fire and flood, and disposal when moving office or home. Donors receive tax receipts from the York University Foundation for the market value of their papers as determined by an independent expert hired by York University Libraries.

Why York University?

Canadian women have been an area of concentration for the acquisition program of the Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections for several decades, and the holdings feature the records of women faculty as well as prominent writers, social reformers, and politicians; a research guide devoted to the field of Women's Studies can be found at <http://www.library.yorku.ca/ccm/ArchivesSpecialCollections/FindingAids/WomensStudies/index.htm>. The editorial and administrative records of *Canadian Woman Studies/les cahiers de la femme* were recently donated to the Clara Thomas Archives. The records of Women's Studies at York University will be transferred to the Clara Thomas Archives as part of the university's records management program; the personal papers of individuals associated with this program will provide the broader context necessary to understand the development and significance of this program as it evolved over time.

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